

September 7, 2012

Federal Communications Commission:

As telemedicine becomes ubiquitous, it is important for individual providers and practices that are not connected to larger entities be afforded some fashion of competitive contractual prices and that FCC recognizes this need as funding is allocated. Private practitioners and practices are most often trying to build volumes and grow practices. As such, telemedicine becomes an attractive option allowing for an equitable distribution of resources to rural areas. Without funding assistance thorough grants, etc., it may prove all but impossible for those practitioners to engage in telemedicine due to the cost of equipment and broadband access. One potential approach may be to offer tiers of financial support for agreed allocation of practice hours to medically under-served areas. Along with financial support, assistance for operational and technology deployment is vital for these providers to succeed.

In regard, to continuing the level of broadband subsidy: This is absolutely vital for rural health organizations to continue to evolve and grow. Broadband technology brings essential elements of care to residents who would most often do without these medical services. Additionally, rural health providers face geographic isolation which creates barriers to continuing education and consistency in exposure to current standards of practice. Available resources make attendance of professional development courses difficult due to financial expense, travel requirements and limited staff to cover obligations of an absent clinician. In the current economic landscape, securing funding that allows for the full contractual cost of broadband access to provide these important facets of support for rural health communities is doubtful. Without a continuation of the subsidization the future of telehealth will prove threatened and quite vulnerable.

Thank you for your consideration of these viewpoints.

If you have future questions or desire additional information, please do not hesitate to call on me.

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